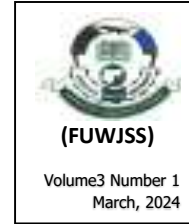# INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE TO DRUG ABUSE IN PLATEAU STATE UNIVERSITY, BOKKOS, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Drug abuse is a global challenge which affects society and the quality of education in institutions of learning. In an attempt to assess how Plateau State University, Bokkos response to the menance of drug abuse, this study investigates the extent to which the Plateau State University authorities response to incidences of drug abuse among staff and students. The study adopts mixed research methods involving social survey and qualitative research designs. The study employed a multi-stage sampling procedure to select a sample size of ninety-eight (98) respondents out of a population of 7,329 persons. Also, two heads of department who were knowledgeable about issues that this study interrogates were purposively selected for in-depth interview (IDI). The study results established that the institutional measures for treating drug cases in Plateau State University, Bokkos, are not effective as well as facilities, internal mechanisms, strategies and policies for managing drug abuse are grossly inadequate. The study concludes that the menace of drug abuse in Plateau State University, Bokkos has resulted to weak social bonds among students and staff of the institution. Hence, the study recommends the full establishment of couselling and rehabilitation units in the University.

Keywords: Drug abuse, social control, couselling unit, higher institutions of learning

Introduction

Drug abuse is a global challenge, and affects societies in varying degrees. Its existence and extent have been considered one of the major challenges

confronting learning institutions. Globally, the harmful use of alcohol alone has been estimated to result in 3.3 million deaths each year and at least 15.3 million persons worldwide have been documented to be suffering from drug use disorder (WHO, 2014). Hence, the understanding of the extent of abuse is necessary in order to respond and/or control the menace. Where the level has reached worrisome height, it vitiates the quality of education in institutions of learning. Presently, drugs or substances of abuse have become, consistently, one of major concerns of every community in Nigeria. As a result, every state has the presence of one or all the agencies of social control such as National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), rehabilitation centres, mental health clinics or neuropsychiatric hospitals (Salubuyi, Makun, Muhammad, Ossamulu & Kure, 2021).

Despite the frantic efforts of the formal and non-formal agents of social control, the extent of drug abuse still paints a blightful, opaque and disheartening picture in institutions of learning and other parts of society. Presently, drug abuse is increasingly becoming an epidemic in Nigeria owing to the large scale availability of illicit and controlled substances in the country. Hence, the inability of the regulatory bodies such as National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) and The National Agency for Food Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) to effectively control the illicit trade in banned and controlled substances is worrisome (Otorkpa, 2019, p. 2). The existence of drug use as a social problem is a recent phenomenon. Hitherto, the social control mechanism was effective. To Mensah (2019), different cultures have developed social rituals and rules around drug use as a way to control their impact on society. It is within this context that Kavutha, and Kariuki (2015) lucidly aver that actual existence of drug use as a social problem was rare because of strong social structures. The low levels or non-existence of drug use was sustained as a result of strong kinship ties that ran through different.

According to Salubuyi et al, (2021), drug of abuse can be divided into three classes- Illegal drugs, Prescription drugs and New Psychoactive Substances (NPS). These drugs can serve instrumental, therapeutic and recreational purposes to the user. Accordingly, instrumental substances are often used to enhance academic (and/or other) performance(s). Many individuals use therapeutic drugs to treat or prevent diseases and illnesses for general well-being. Achieving pleasurable feeling or psychological state is the major purpose for using substances. However, irrespective of the medical function of a drug, drugs and other substances could be abused when users procure and use them despite the fact that their pharmacological requirement is not necessary.

It is in view of the foregoing that drug abuse is referred to as any use at all of an illegal drug or misuse of a legal drug (Jansen & Darracot-

Cankovic, 2013). However, The World Health Organization (WHO) categorically refers to drug and substance abuse as the use of harmful or hazardous psychoactive substances, ranging from alcohol to illegal psychotropic drugs. Drug use and abuse, also can lead to organized, and other, crimes as well as disruption of normal societal activities such as schooling, commerce and even politics (Ottu, Ukpanah, Etim & Ebong, 2019). Hence, students experience difficulty in academics due to drug use. Such difficulties include earning low grades, doing poorly on test, missing class and falling behind in academic performance. This, inadvertently, affects other individuals, the community and society. Other students who do not use drugs may suffer, academically, as a result of their peers taking drugs. The secondary effects of drugs such as catering for friends of drug abuse, being victims of assault amongst other things can affect academic performance of those who do not use and abuse drugs.

Menace of Drug Abuse in Nigeria

Since 2008, Nigeria was ranked, in comparison with other third-world countries, among the highest users of dangerous drugs such as alcohol, tobacco, cannabis sativa, benzodiazepines, cocaine and opioids (Degenhardt, Chiu, Sampson, Kessier & Anthony, 2008), and it seemingly persists to the present. Despite the effort of organizations and groups such as the National drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), The National Agency for Food Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) to combat the drug menace, drug crime remains a terror challenge in the country. Despite the efforts of rehabilitation centres, mental health clinics or neuropsychiatric hospitals to tackle the effects of drug abuse, the problem keep rising unabated. Hence, drug abuse is a major challenge in Nigeria and efforts put in place are still not enough to address the issue of drug abuse (Salubuyi, et al, 2021), and this should be a great concern to everyone.

A large number of Nigerian youths use drugs, and the use of the chemical substance for recreational and non-medical purposes poses health and social risk (Ejikeme, 2017), and despite government's concern and heightened campaigns against the vice among school students, there exists a parallel accelerated rate of students who are illicit drug users. Students are however expected to be aware of the effects of drug abuse and be committed to their studies in that the habit still exists and has so far been difficult to eliminate (McIntosh, 2014).

Consequently, drug abuse negatively affects students' academics such as through missing of classes, truancy, gangsterism, engagement in crime, criminal activities amongst others. It also negatively affects students' minds and thought processes, predisposing them to errant behavioural tendencies such as thuggery, hooliganism and the like. The findings by United Nations

Office on Drugs and Crime/National Bureau of Statistics (UNODC/NBS) (2019) reviewed in the succeeding sections indicates that Nigeria has a serious drug abuse problem among young people in Nigeria, a major sub-category of which are students, and the curative, rehabilitative and legal modalities earlier employed to combat it have not yielded appreciable result (Chukwuka & Freddy, 2015). As a result, individuals, families and institutions are increasingly seeking ways and measures that are better to respond to the menace of drug abuse. Hence, the study seeks to assess the institutional response to drug abuse. Specifically, the study investigates the extent of, and institutional response to, drug abuse in Plateau State University, Bokkos with the view of curbing the menace. In Nigeria today drug use has become more prevalent than at any other times, NAFDAC (2013). The study of United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2017 cited in Salubuyi, Makun, Muhammad, Ossamulu & Kure 2021) indicated that the prevalence of drugs of abuse in the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria presented is in the following order South-West (22.4%), South-South (16.6%), South-East (13.8%), North-East (13.8), North-West (12.0%), North-Central (10.0%). But the quantitative research carried out by Salubuyi, Makun, Muhammad, Ossamulu and Kure 2021) reveals an exceptional high daily abuse of all drug classes, with (89.3%).

A study conducted by National Bureau of Statistics (NBA) and Center for Research and Information on Substance Abuse (CRISA) of 9,344 problem drug users across 36 states and Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and 2,787 Key Informant Survey (KIS) funded by UNODC (2018) found that nearly one quarter of high-risk drug users had been arrested for a drug-related offence during the course of their drug use, while the majority, 73%, had been arrested for possession of drugs. The prevalence of 20–40% and 20.9% of drug abuse was also reported among students and youths, respectively (UNODC/NBS, 2019, p. 9-10). The research by UNODC/NBS, (2019: 9-10) in African region indicates that drug use was most common among those who were between the ages of 25 and 39 years, while the rates of past-year use were lowest among those who were below 24 years of age. Cannabis sativa remains the most widely abused illicit substance in the African Region, to reiterate, with the highest prevalence and increase in West and Central Africa with rates between 5.2 % and 13.5%. Also, the study conducted by National Bureau of Statistics (NBA) and Center for Research and Information on Substance Abuse (CRISA) of 9,344 problem drug users across 36 states and Federal Capital Territory (FCT) funded by UNODC (2018) found that the past year's prevalence of any drug use in Nigeria has been estimated at 14.4 per cent or 14.3 million people aged between 15 and 64 years. The extent of drug use in Nigeria is

comparatively high when compared with the 2016 global annual prevalence of any drug use of 5.6 per cent among the adult population.

Codeine and tramadol abuse especially among adolescent youths is a new form of substance or drug abuse in the country (Ejikeme, 2017). In the Lafia metropolis "relevine" is obtained from the combination of tramadol and codeine (Tramadol + Codeine). Tramadol is available in different milligrams ranging from 50, 100, 200, to 500, and is commonly consumed. Based on the information gotten from the National Agency for Food, Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) the consumption of tramadol + codeine can result in drowsiness, decreased alertness, and sometimes agitation and euphoria over dosage of codeine can lead to schizophrenia and organ failure.

In some societies, alcoholic drinks are the most commonly abused drug. Second to alcohol, marijuana is the most commonly abused drug. Popularity is not the only thing these two drugs have in common, though. Studies have indicated that cannabis is the most commonly used drug. the study of NBA and CRISA funded by UNODC (2018) reveals that an estimated 10.8% of the population or 10.6 million people had used cannabis in the past year, and the average age of initiation of cannabis use among the general population was 19 years. Hitherto, much like alcohol, marijuana was legal in many states, and nearly 50% of college students admitted that they used marijuana for recreational reasons (Rabiner, 2009). However, because it (cannabis) contains a mind-altering substance and produces exhilarating intoxication with hallucinations, its abuse and misuse by consumers occasioned its ban in many countries, globally, including Nigeria (Odivwri & Adomi, 2016). Presently, cannabis is an illicit drug.

Other drugs that are commonly abused are Opioids. The misuse of prescription pills (without prescription) is arguably the most dangerous form of substance abuse that exists currently. On average, as it was captured, opioids like OxyContin and Vicodin contributed to the daily loss of 130 lives. Addiction can occur after just 10 consecutive days of use, making these narcotics just as addictive as they are dangerous (Barrett, Meisner & Stewart, 2008). Another commonly abused class of drugs is sedatives which include Valium and Xanax. They are often prescribed to patients to relieve anxiety and panic attacks. Essentially, their purpose is to assist with relaxation and promote sleep. When used in combination with alcohol, however, these drugs can slow your breathing rate so adversely that it can result in death (Weaver, 2015).

Suffice it to say here that possession and use of alcohol and other drugs are illegal for all youth. Beyond that, however, there is strong evidence of an association between alcohol and other drug use and delinquent behavior of juveniles. Substance abuse is associated with both violent and income-

generating crimes by youth. This increases fear among community residents and the demand for juvenile and criminal justice services, thus increasing the burden on these resources. Gangs, drug trafficking, prostitution, and growing numbers of youth homicides are among the social and criminal justice problems often linked to adolescent substance abuse (Alimen & Alimen, 2013). Furthermore, the harmful use of codeine containing cough syrup leads to mental disorders in Nigeria (Ejikeme & Ejikeme, 2018, p. 5). Based on the information gotten from the National Agency for Food, Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) the consumption of tramadol + codeine can result in drowsiness, decreased alertness, and sometimes agitation and euphoria over dosage of codeine can lead to schizophrenia and organ failure. Also, a quantitative research conducted by Salubuyi, Makun, Muhammad, Ossamulu and Kure (2021) reveals that generally, elevation of mood was most recorded (192) to be the effects drug abusers feel when they consume the drugs/substances. In view of the foregoing, school administration report that significant number of students who drop out of school do so because drugs interfere with their academics (Kavutha, et al., 2015). Hence, while the habit still exists and has so far been difficult to eliminate (McIntosh, 2014), students are not only expected to be aware of the effects of drug abuse and be committed to their studies, premium has to be placed on mechanisms to respond and/or control the menace of drug abuse for effective teaching and learning in the learning institutions.

Many scholars have however recommended ways of responding to the menace of drug abuse. Some commonly suggested approaches and strategies to address the menace include: a) Implementing educational programmes and interventions by involving providing accurate information about the risks and consequences of drug use, promoting healthy coping mechanisms, and building resilience against drug abuse; b) Identifying and intervening in drug abuse cases at an early stage to ensure detection through screening programmes and the provision of timely intervention services (Levy, Williams, Ryan, Gonzalez, Patrick, Quigley & Walker, 2016); c) Offering accessible and evidence-based treatment programs that address both the physical and psychological aspects of drug addiction including medication-assisted therapies, counseling, support groups, and aftercare services to promote long-term recovery. A study conducted by NBA and CRISA of 9,344 problem drug users across 36 states and FCT funded by UNODC (2018) found that two-thirds of high-risk drug users reported a self-perceived need for drug treatment. Around 40% among those reported that they had wanted to receive drug treatment but were unable to access such services due to the cost of treatment, stigma associated with accessing such services as well as stigma associated with substance use in general.

The availability of adequate drug treatment services were the major barriers in accessing drug treatment in Nigeria; and d) Strengthening law enforcement efforts to disrupt drug trafficking networks, reduce the availability of illicit drugs, and deter drug use through strict enforcement of drug laws (Childress, Farrell, Bhimani, & Maass, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

This study is fascinated by Social Control Theory. It serves as a useful theoretical framework for understanding institutional response to drug abuse in Plateau State University. According to Hirschi (1969), people conform because of social bonds. Hence, deviant behavior results from the onset of weak social bonds between individuals and society. To the perspective, social control arises from several elements. These include: first, attachment to others through strong, caring relationships; second, commitment to legitimate social goals such as university education and consideration of the costs of deviance; third, involvement in legitimate activities such as academic activities, sports teams, religious body; and fourth, belief in a common value system that says conformity is right while deviance is wrong (Stolley, 2005, p. 115). As a result, Durkheim (1895) suggests that social control results from the cohesion of social norms and the emotional bonds that bind individuals to the society and its institutions.

Hence, to respond and/or control drug abuse stems from the cohesion of social norms and the emotional bonds that bind individuals to society and its institution. More succinctly, curbing drug abuse is to get young people and students involved in, and feeling attached to, socially or culturally accepted or approved (such as academic) activities and goals (of not abusing drugs). The young people or students who lack attachment to social institutions, such as family, school, and community, are more likely to abuse drugs. Also, for effective response and social control, there is need for mechanisms, strategies, or policies that societies have to put in place to regulate behavior and enforce social norms.

Social Control Theory posits that individuals are naturally inclined to engage in deviant behavior. It is social bonds, such as strong relationships with parents, school, and peers that act to check the behavior (Akers & Lee, 1999). Therefore, it is the lack of social control that increases the risk of drug abuse, and according to Chukwuka and Freddy (2015), the abuse of drugs and alcohol constitutes one of the main causes of impairment of social competence and performance. This also, largely, affects the academic performance of students (Akanbi, Augustina, Theophilus, Muritala & Ajiboye, 2015). The social control operates in formal (such as code of laws and regulations that discourage drug abuse, misuse and other deviant behaviour) and informal (such as attitudes, beliefs, and practices of family

or community members and peers that discourage drug abuse and misuse) social control. It is the mechanisms, strategies and policies that integrate the formal and informal social control that will birth effective response to curbing drug abuse malady.

The literature reviewed presented the extent of drug abuse, drugs commonly used and institutional response to control the menace. The review examined policies and interventions that have been developed to control drug abuse such as diversion programmes, community-based programmes and law enforcement and regulatory agencies approach amongst others. However, only few have beam their search light on formal and informal social control such as laws and community involvement in effective strategies integrated with institutional involvement to prevent and manage drug abuse. Therefore, there is dearth of studies on addressing breakdown in social norms as well as strengthening social bonds and control mechanisms to prevent drug abuse in institutions of learning in an integrated manner. This is, partly, the gap that the study seeks to close. Ultimately, there is lack of sufficient studies on the internal institutional strategies and mechanism of drug abuse control. This is the strategy that will promote positive relationships between young people and social institutions such as family, school, and community to prevent the onset of drug abuse.

Research Methodology

The study adopts social survey and qualitative research designs. This is a mixed-method to allow for near precise measurement of the extent of, and response to, drug abuse. The study used a multistage sampling technique to select a sample size from the 7,329 (PLASU, Registry Office, 2023) population of students in Plateau State University, Bokkos. Hence, using Taro Yamane's (1964) formula, ninety-eight (98) sample size was selected using simple random sampling across the departments. In the first stage, stratified random sampling was used to select the departments from the list of faculties and simple random sampling method to select respondents from departments and levels. The choice of this technique is to give every respondent equal chance of being selected. Non-probability sampling technique was equally adopted to purposively select two heads of department for an In-Depth Interview (IDI) who are knowledgeable on the phenomenon of study.

Extent of Drug Abuse in Plateau State University, Bokkos
Table 1: Distribution of Respondents on the Rate of Involvement of Students in Drug Abuse

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)

Very high	19	19.4
High	43	43.9
Moderate	11	11.2
Low	8	8.2
Very low	17	17.3
Total	**98**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 1 indicates that majority 43 (43.9%) of the respondents agreed that the rate of drug abuse among students in the study area is high. This is followed by very high, 19 (19.4%). However, this is not consistent with the study of UNODC (2017 cited in Salubuyi, Makun, Muhammad, Ossamulu & Kure 2021) which indicated that the prevalence of drugs of abuse in the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria presented is in the following order South-West (22.4%), South-South (16.6%), South-East (13.8%), North-East (13.8), North-West (12.0%), North-Central (10.0%). But the quantitative research carried out by Salubuyi, Makun, Muhammad, Ossamulu and Kure (2021) reveals an exceptional high daily abuse of all drug classes, with (89.3%). This is consistent with the study of UNODC/NBS which reveals that a prevalence of 20–40 per cent and 20.9% of drug abuse was reported among students and youths, respectively (UNODC/NBS, 2019, p. 9-10). It is also in tandem with the study NBA and CRISA of 9,344 problem drug users across 36 states and Federal Capital Territory (FCT) funded by UNODC (2018) which found that nearly one quarter of high-risk drug users had been arrested for a drug-related offence during the course of their drug use, while the majority, 73%, had been arrested for possession of drugs.

Table 2: Institutional Responses on commonly Abused Drugs among Students

Types of Drugs	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Alcohol	30	30.6
Cocaine and Heroine	9	9.1
Marijuana	22	22.4
Codeine	11	11.2
Tramadol	7	7.1
Hallucinogen (makes high)	19	19.3
Total	**98**	**100**

Source, Field Survey, 2023

Table 2 above reveals that majority 30 (30.6%) of the respondents take alcoholic drinks followed by marijuana, 22 respondents representing

(18.5%). This connotes that the most used and abused drug is alcoholic drinks followed by marijuana. The second highest figure is consistent with the findings of (UNODC/NBS, 2019) which reveals that Cannabis sativa remains the most widely abused illicit substance in the African Region, with the highest prevalence and increase in West and Central Africa with rates between 5.2 per cent and 13.5 per cent. Cannabis was the most commonly used drug followed by opioids; mainly the non-medical use of prescription opioids and cough syrup.

The Effects of Drug Abuse in Plateau State University, Bokkos
Table 3: Distribution of Respondents on the Effects of Drug Abuse

S/N	Effects of Drugs	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	Poor academic performance	19	19.3
	Involvement in crime, mental health problem	30	30.6
	Expulsion and dropping out of school	13	13.2
	Risky behaviors	4	4.1
	Lack of respect for the law and authorities	12	12.2
	Inability to maintain a good relationship with fellow students	6	6.1
	Truancy in school is often associated with drug abuse	14	14.2
	Total	**98**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey 2023.

Table 3 shows that majority, 30 (30.6%) see the effect of drug use and abuse as involvement in crime, mental health problem. However, this is not the popular response. This is because out of 98 respondents, this is because 68 respondents agreed with other effects rather than involvement in crime and mental health problems.

Out of the 68 respondents, the second majority 19 (19.3), see the effect of drug use and drug abuse is low academic performance. The drug was also associated with a high rate of drop-out of school and traffic accidents due to impairment of cognitive and psychomotor functions of the addicts.

Table 4: Distribution of Responses on Institutional Measures for Treating Drug Abuse Cases

Variable	Frequency	Percentage

Very Effective	8	8.1
Somewhat effective	13	13.3
Not effective	60	61.2
Indifferent	17	17.3
Total	**98**	**100**

Source: Field work, 2023

Table 4 indicates that the institutional measures for treating drug cases are not effective with 60 (61.2%). This is, distantly, followed by 17(17.3%) of the respondents who remain indifferent. This is consistent with the study conducted by NBA and CRISA funded by UNODC (2018) which found that two-thirds of high-risk drug users reported a self-perceived need for drug treatment. Around 40% among those reported that they had wanted to receive drug treatment but were unable to access such services due to the cost of treatment, stigma associated with accessing such services as well as stigma associated with substance use in general. The availability of adequate drug treatment services were the major barriers in accessing drug treatment in Nigeria.

To corroborate this, in an in-depth interview, the interviewee reveals that:

> …psychology department has established a lab or clinic where those with drug problems are treated. Information was given to other departments to bring cases of drug abuse for treatment. The psychology department has a functional lab for rehabilitating drug addicts. However, the lab is not enough to address the problem of drug abuse in the institution.

On the presence of other measures of social control in the institution, in an in-depth interview, an interviewee said that "there is no other internal mechanism for handling drug cases. However, with the introduction of faculty of education some strategies for curbing the menace of drug abuse will come with it".

From the fore going, there is little effort geared towards tackling the menace of drug abuse in the institution. Apart from the societal, formal and informal, strategies for curbing the rising level of drug abuse which has not yielded desired results, the internal measure has not been developed to tackle the drug abuse challenge confronting the institution.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study discovered that the rate of drug abuse is high. Out of 98, 43 (43.9%). of the respondents agreed that the rate of drug abuse among students in the study area is high. This is followed by very high, 19 (19.4%). This results from the onset of weak social bonds between the students and the institution. Therefore, the institution should strengthen its mechanism and synergise with formal and informal social mechanisms such as laws enforcement and community involvement to integrate the entire gamut of drug abuse control. This is to tackle the challenge posed by drug peddlers. It is also to ensure result in strong and caring relationships between staff and students, commitment to university education and consideration of the costs of drug abuse by students, involvement in academic activities and belief in a common value system that emphasizes the rightness of conformity. This will result in the social glue of the social norms and the emotional bonds that bind students to society and its institutions.

Furthermore, the study found that institutional measures for treating drug cases are not effective with 60 (61.2%), and the facilities for treating drug abuse cases are grossly inadequate. Also, the study discovered that there are no other internal mechanisms, strategies and policies for managing drug abuse. Hence, we recommend that a fully functional counseling and rehabilitation units be established by the institution to early identify, treat and support drug abusers. This is to enable the early dictation of the onset of drug abuse and the rehabilitation of different degrees of addiction. Also, recreational activities, fully functional library and other learning facilities should be deliberately introduced to engage the students largely to divert their attention from abusing drugs and other vices.

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